Distance Learning for
Contemporary Issues (12th Grade)
Weeks #1-4
April 6 - 27

Essential Question:
How has the Covid 19 pandemic information and facts changed over time?

Instructions:
1. As we move through this historic pandemic around COVID-19, journal how our government reacts to a nation in crisis. Document where you get your sources of information, noting why those sources are credible. A journal entry can be as simple as a paragraph documenting info and dates.

2. Maintain a journal of events by making at least 3 different entries each week. Below is the focus that each week’s journal should touch on. It can be online using Google Docs or on paper. (3 Journal entries x 4 (weeks) = 12 total entries of your work)

3. Choose one of the following ways to present your information: a Paper, a Journal (Paper), a PowerPoint or a Video Journal.

Week #2
Focus on Politics. How has the Federal and State governments responded to the crisis? Think about how Congress has worked together to help the American people and what the President has ordered to happen over the last few weeks. Look at the Federal Reserve and the stock market and what restrictions or help did the gov’t have in place to help keep the economic part of the crisis to a minimum?

Below are a few sources that may help you in your process. You may or may not use them in your own journaling, they are here to help you.

https://www.npr.org/2020/04/02/825293201/a-president-is-not-able-to-order-a-national-quarantine-experts-say

https://www.foxnews.com/politics/schiff-coronavirus-comission

ARTICLE 1

Schiff proposes coronavirus commission, with subpoena power, to probe pandemic response

By Brooke Singman, Published April 03, 2020

Fox News

House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff on Friday publicly proposed the establishment of a bipartisan commission, with subpoena power, to investigate the response to the coronavirus pandemic by the Trump administration and other levels of government.
Schiff, D-Calif., had floated empaneling a "9/11-style commission" to review the administration’s actions earlier this week, but began circulating a draft of legislation on Friday.

Schiff’s commission would include 10 lawmakers to examine the government’s preparedness in advance of the COVID-19 pandemic and the response to it -- and would provide recommendations to "improve our ability to respond to and recover from future outbreaks, epidemics and pandemics," his office said Friday.

The legislation, according to his office, “closely mirrors” the 9/11 Commission where members of Congress, experts and current and former officials reviewed the Bush administration’s handling and response.

“After Pearl Harbor, September 11, and many momentous events in American history, independent, bipartisan commissions have been established to provide a complete accounting of what happened, what we did right and wrong, and what we can do to better protect the country in the future,” Schiff said in a statement Friday. “Though we are still in the early days of the Coronavirus crisis, there is no doubt that such a comprehensive and authoritative review will be required.”

Schiff has already faced criticism for his proposal, with Intelligence Committee Ranking Republican Rep. Devin Nunes accusing him of a “dumb stunt.”

"His Russia collusion hoax failed, his Ukraine scam failed, and his efforts to cover up FISA abuse failed," Nunes, R-Calif., told Fox News on Wednesday when Schiff first floated the commission. "So, Schiff is launching yet another dumb stunt to justify his never-ending media relations operation.”

Schiff has led multiple Trump-focused probes, including the House impeachment inquiry and investigations into whether members of the president's campaign colluded with Russia to influence the 2016 election, the president's financial transactions, and more.

But Schiff insisted on Friday: “This is not an exercise in casting blame or scoring political points, but something that the American people should rightly expect from their government as an exercise in accountability.”

The commission, Schiff said, would hold hearings and public events to obtain information and “educate the public,” and would also have subpoena power to “compel cooperation by relevant witnesses.”

After Pearl Harbor and 9/11, we looked at what went wrong to learn from our mistakes. Once we've recovered, we need a nonpartisan commission to review our response and how we can better prepare for the next pandemic.

I’m working on a bill to do that.

Schiff said that the commission would not be established until February 2021, “hopefully after the pandemic has been overcome and after the presidential election.”

Schiff’s announcement comes after House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., on Thursday announced that she would create a separate House committee to oversee the administration’s coronavirus response, chaired by Rep. James Clyburn D-S.C.

Pelosi said the committee she formed is designed to address the “here and now,” specifically concerning the allocation of the historic amount of federal funds directed to the economic recovery, and compared it to the committee chaired by then-Sen. Harry Truman in 1941 to investigate waste, fraud and abuse in defense spending in the early days of World War II.
"With over $2 trillion in emergency relief, we need to ensure those dollars are spent carefully and effectively," Pelosi said of the massive stimulus bill Congress already passed to address the coronavirus pandemic.

President Trump blasted Pelosi and House Democrats for yet another “witch hunt.”

“It's witch hunt after witch hunt after witch hunt,” Trump said Thursday. "And, in the end, it's people doing the witch hunt who are losing --- and they've been losing by a lot. And it's not any time for witch hunts.

"It's time to get this enemy defeated. Conducting these partisan investigations during a pandemic is a really big waste of vital resources, time, attention,” Trump continued. “And we want to fight for American lives, not waste time and build up my poll numbers, because that's all they're doing, because everyone knows it's ridiculous.”

Fox News' Gregg Re contributed to this report.

Brooke Singman is a Politics Reporter for Fox News. Follow her on Twitter at @BrookeSingman.

ARTICLE 2

Fact Check: A Blanket National Quarantine Is Likely Not Legal

President Trump last weekend raised — and then dropped — the idea of placing residents of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut under a quarantine to try to limit the spread of the coronavirus outside of the nation's hardest-hit region.

That hasn't stopped rumors from spreading that the country is under a lockdown, something the Federal Emergency Management Agency has debunked on its website.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said on CNN on Wednesday that she would like to see a national stay-at-home order, adding, "I don't know why the scientific community isn't more outspoken" in pushing for one.

But could the president order a national lockdown or place states under quarantine?
Legal experts say not really.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that the federal government has authority for isolation and quarantine under the Commerce Clause of the U.S. Constitution and that under the Public Health Service Act, "the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services is authorized to take measures to prevent the entry and spread of communicable diseases from foreign countries into the United States and between states."

But Polly J. Price, a professor of law and public health at Emory University, tells NPR: "If you're talking about quarantine in terms of encouraging people to stay home or closing businesses — and that's what public health folks talk about as social distancing measures, really — I think from the White House that can be advisory only and that those are exclusively state powers."

She says though that the federal government does have other tools at its disposal to limit people from traveling between states, including controlling who can fly.

A highway sign urges out-of-state visitors to self-quarantine for 14 days if they plan on staying in Massachusetts. Charles Krupa/AP

Price says the CDC can issue "do not board" orders to travelers. "They tend to be related to prohibiting air travel by persons who have a tuberculosis diagnosis, for example. But that's an authority that has been used," although she notes, not frequently.

And, as was done after the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks, the Federal Aviation Administration can ground air travel altogether.

President Trump has used his authority to require foreign nationals arriving from China to be quarantined and has prevented foreign nationals from Europe from flying into the U.S., as well as limiting border crossings from Canada and Mexico.

**Options limited**

But there's not much more he can do within the country, says Bradley Moss, a Washington attorney specializing in national security issues.
"It is unclear, absent congressional approval or every state in the union collectively agreeing to it, how any president would have the authority to impose a federal or national quarantine," Moss says.

The federal law on this, he says, "is clearly aimed at individuals or specifically identified groups, not the entire country writ large."

Moss says the president would have to "either personally determine, or get the CDC director to state in writing, that the entire country is reasonably believed to have been exposed to the coronavirus," which Moss says would be "politically treacherous" and "turn the federal law on its head."

The only Supreme Court ruling on the issue, Price says, came a century ago, and that involved whether states could limit travel during a yellow fever epidemic.

She says the court suggested that states can do so and can impose quarantines on incoming travelers, "so long as it's for a valid public health measure."

The authority for interstate quarantine under the Public Health Service Act comes from that period, Price says. "Congress debated what to do about this, and they decided the federal government should have interstate quarantine authority," she says.

"Shotgun quarantine"

In this image originally published in Harper's Weekly in 1858, a mob attacks the Quarantine Marine Hospital in New York because people believed that its use was responsible for numerous yellow fever epidemics. Hulton Archive/Getty Images

During the yellow fever epidemic in the late 19th century, some areas imposed a "shotgun quarantine," Price says, with states, local governments and counties "basically barricading themselves against people coming from infected places."
Trains were stopped in some locations. The government set up refugee camps for people "trying to flee Pensacola and Mobile and New Orleans," but who couldn't go anywhere because places farther north wouldn't let them in. In Arkansas, she says armed guards prevented people trying to cross the Mississippi River from Memphis.

"That's what fear will do to you," Price says.
United to Fight Coronavirus – Except in Congress

The House passed the $2 trillion stimulus bill, but not without fierce partisan debate.

By Susan Milligan, Senior Politics Writer   March 27, 2020, at 4:38 p.m.

United to Fight Coronavirus – Except in Congress

IT WAS THE BEST OF Congresses; it was the worst of Congresses.

Faced with a public health crisis unprecedented in modern America, famously feuding lawmakers ultimately put partisanship and ideological differences aside to approve a massive, $2 trillion disaster assistance plan to help individuals and businesses hurt by the novel coronavirus pandemic and ensuing economic crash.

[ READ: Stimulus Checks Still Weeks Away ]

Except – at first they didn’t, instead falling back on old fights over necessary-vs-profligate spending, and having philosophical fights over trickle-down economics that delayed passage of the package while the virus spreads at a frightening pace.

Lawmakers came together quickly to pass legislation after 9/11 and during the 2008 fiscal crisis (too quickly, say some critics, who think surveillance powers were expanded too much after 9/11, and that not enough restrictions were put on American corporations getting bailed out in 2008). But there was a sense of unity on the Hill during those times, as members came together as Americans to save the country.

Photos: America at Standstill
That sense of unity was fractured and more fragile in the past two weeks, as Congress went through its usual party fights before finally getting a deal done.

The White House and congressional Republicans wanted to provide cash to companies, so the businesses could keep going. Democrats wanted the money, as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Democrat of California said, to "bubble up" instead of trickling down. The result was hundreds of billions of dollars to industry, but with the caveat that it go directly to job retention.

Senate Republicans also sought to kill a part of the package that gives $600 a week more in unemployment benefits, with Sen. Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina, taking to the Senate floor to warn that some Americans would have no incentive to find work.

"Something hit me like a ton of bricks," Graham said during Senate debate. "Under this bill you get $23.15 an hour based on a 40-hour work week not to work," Graham said from the Senate floor on Wednesday night. "We've created Pandora's box for our economy."

[MAP: The Spread of Coronavirus.]

Sen. Bernie Sanders, independent of Vermont, delivered a lengthy tirade in response, mocking his colleagues for refusing to help unemployed Americans. "Oh my word, will the universe survive? How absurd and wrong is that? What kind of value system is that?" Sanders said, characteristically waving his arms in frustration.

In the end, the effort to strip the bill of the extra $600 a week failed, but it delayed passage of the rescue package in the days before a record week for new unemployment claims.

It's not unusual for lawmakers in both parties to try to stick seeming-unrelated provisions into must-pass bills to get their wish lists into law. Budget and sweeping appropriations bills, for example, have long included pet provisions to win critical votes.
The coronavirus disaster aid package, which faced a much more crucial deadline because of mounting cases and unemployment, was no exception.

[READ: The Race to Prepare Hospitals for Coronavirus]

Democrats wanted (and got some) funding for public broadcasting and the Kennedy Center, which GOP critics said did not belong in a disaster relief package. Pelosi sought to nearly double the budget for the Institute of Museum and Library Services in the bill (the final package included $200 million, a fraction of her request).

Energy policy, too, became a sticking point, with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Republican of Kentucky, complaining that Democrats were trying to slip the Green New Deal into the rescue package. That wasn’t strictly true; the Democrats had asked for subsidies for clean energy businesses (since the bill also had money that helped oil companies) and for fuel-efficiency standards for airlines getting part of the financial help.

Even the divisive social question of abortion became a sticking point in the bill. Republicans succeeded in expanding the Hyde Amendment, which bans federal funding of abortions, to apply to aid delivered to states, counties and tribal governments in the package. The measure also gives broad authority to the Small Business Administration to deny emergency loans to Planned Parenthood, though the assistance is available to other nonprofits.

During floor debate Friday, several House Republicans made their distaste for the bill clear, even as they announced they would grudgingly vote for it. Rep. Louie Gohmert, Republican of Texas, sprayed the debate podium and microphone liberally with Lysol – leading a couple of his colleagues to cough, a bit of theatrics while some of his colleagues were more quietly wiping down surfaces or covering their mouths.

Rep. Glenn Grothman, Republican of Wisconsin, complained he was on a normally-packed Southwest flight from Milwaukee that had just 4 passengers – two of whom were congressmen. "President Trump is right to act and stand up to the purists who would let businesses go under," Grothman told his colleagues.

And when it came time to get final passage of the measure in the House Friday, lawmakers saw another roadblock – one that would be annoying in normal circumstances, but potentially dangerous with the spread of the virus.

A Kentucky Republican, Rep. Thomas Massie, didn’t like the bill, and though he knew he couldn’t stop it, he also knew that as a single member of a 435-member body, he could demand a quorum, forcing many members back to Washington to vote.
President Donald Trump slammed Massie, calling him a "third-rate grandstander" and saying the GOP should dump him. Former Secretary of State John Kerry was more blunt (and unusually, more profane) in his assessment.

"Breaking news: Congressman Massie has tested positive for being an asshole. He must be quarantined to prevent the spread of his massive stupidity. He's given new meaning to the term #Masshole. (Finally, something the president and I can agree on!)," Kerry tweeted.

Lawmakers had to sit above the chamber, in the public visitors area, as they awaited Massie's demand for a quorum – a move meant to keep the CDC-recommended distance between individuals.

"Because of one Member of Congress refusing to allow emergency action entire Congress must be called back to vote in House," tweeted Rep. Peter King, Republican of New York. "Risk of infection and risk of legislation being delayed. Disgraceful. Irresponsible."

Massie, at least, managed to prompt a note of bipartisanship at the end of House session – anger at him from both sides of the aisle.

Susan Milligan, Senior Politics Writer